

Good evening, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak. I am Nancy Landona, Chief Operating Officer at Brass City Charter School in Waterbury, and I am here to address the issue of funding for public charter schools.

We are a small school, with 360 students in grades PK-8. For years our school was flat-funded at a per-pupil amount well below the district public schools. Over the past few years we have seen incremental progress toward addressing the issue of flat funding and it felt as if the state was recognizing that public charter schools, like all other public schools, need additional resources to address the growing needs of our student population. The phase-in of weighted funding brings necessary dollars into our classrooms and directly impacts the lives of our students and staff.

We received about \$182,000 in weighted funding this school year. These funds have helped us to maintain our intervention staffing level as well as to reinstate the Art teacher position which was cut during the pandemic.

In preparation for these remarks, I looked today at the State's EdSight data for 2020-21 to compare per-pupil spending at charter schools with that at district schools. Taking out RESC numbers, I calculated that charter schools average per-pupil expenditures were \$11,986, while district expenditures averaged \$22,152. I was, frankly, stunned by these numbers; although I knew there was a disparity, I didn't realize the extent of it. Let me repeat those numbers...\$11,986 vs. \$22,152.

Charter schools must do everything a district school does, but with little more than HALF of the money! We answer for student growth and proficiency on standardized tests, provide nutritious meals, social-emotional learning, academic support...same as districts. We are included in nearly every regulation, education statute, and reporting requirement, same as districts. What is not the same? \$11,986 vs. \$22,152.

When my 3-year old granddaughter said to me on Sunday, "YaYa, I'm so small," I responded, "Yes, you are small, but you are mighty." I'd like to think of the public charter sector in the same way – small, but mighty. We do more with less every...single...day. However, it has become increasingly difficult to do so. Like every public school district we feel the impact of teacher shortages, rising costs of utilities, insurance, employee benefits, and supplies. Federal money during the pandemic has helped us, but that money will run out soon. What happens to us then?

\$11,986 vs. \$22,152. I'm not asking you to raise us up to that district average. I am asking that you reconsider this budget proposal and continue the phase-in of weighted funding for charter schools. Please continue to value the education of all children in Connecticut. Wherever they live in this state, whatever school they attend, our children are small, but they are mighty, and they deserve our support.

As always, we at Brass City Charter School take very seriously our responsibilities to our students, families, staff, and the taxpayers whose dollars fund our school, and we pledge to be good stewards of all public funds received.

Thank you again for this opportunity to bring my concerns before the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,
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